THE NATIONAL NEED OF SPANISH

A PAPER BY
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American Association for International Conciliation

PAN AMERICAN DIVISION

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As the director of the Pan American Division of this Association I am responsible for having the inclosed article reprinted and distributed, and I have pleasure in sending you a copy of it because I believe it to be in general a good statement of an urgent need. I desire, however, to express my absolute dissent from the conclusion announced by Professor Luquiens (page 709) that: "They must teach the Spanish of South America, not, as now, the Spanish of Spain;" and that (page 710): "Only South American Spanish can give us what we need." Without entering into a formal argument regarding this not infrequently discussed matter, I wish to

emphasize a few facts. The first of these is that there is no definite and generally accepted language, dialect or form of speech which may be described as "the Spanish of South America," since there are slight variations in pronunciation and in vocabulary in practically every Spanish American country; the second, that the variations in pronunciation which characterize the American countries can, in the main, be duplicated in certain provinces of Spain, yet no one thinks of teaching anything but Castilian to those who look forward to traveling or living in Spain, in any province whatsoever; the third, that although the people of the Spanish American countries do not follow the Castilian pronunciation as a rule in their ordinary speech, they usually teach it in their schools, and it is commonly heard from the stage, and often from the public platform; and the fourth, that if any person is capable of learning to speak Castilian in a school of the United States, he can readily drop into the kind of Spanish he may

need to use in conversing with the people of a particular country. Proper Castilian is as readily understood by the people of all the Spanish American countries as any other kind of Spanish; and while it is true that the native of any one of these countries somewhat resents the affectation of Castilian by a compatriot, he does not object to it in a North American, admitting that the latter would continue to adhere to it for any length of time in the constant presence of the numerous slight variations that characterize the speech of the American countries.

I think Professor Luquiens would have stated the case with entire adequateness if he had simply emphasized, as he emphasizes in his article, the need to change, not the pronunciation, but the subjects about which conversation is made in the text-books.

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By Frederick Bliss Luquiens

ON August fifth of last year the newspapers of the world spoke of one thing only—England had declared war on Germany. There was no space, even on last pages, for a certain item which at any other time would have been featured. During those very hours when Sir Edward Grey was writing his fateful message to William of Germany, the "Cristóbal," freight and passenger steamer of our government, was making the first ocean-to-ocean voyage of a cargo-carrying boat through the Panama Canal. Even if our journals had mentioned this, there would hardly have been time to consider its importance. Now, however, having become used even to this world war, we may realize that the two events constitute one of the most striking coincidences in history, at least in the history of trade. The declaration of war meant the immediate diminution of South America's trade with Europe in general and Germany in particular. The opening of the canal at last put Ecuador, Peru, and Chile commercially within our reach. It seemed as if the hand of fate at one and the same moment were opening the door of South America to us, and closing it upon Europe.

The canal, in itself alone, is an opportunity. For many years the position of our exporters to Chile has been analogous to that of a storekeeper on a side street. The main thoroughfare ran across the mid-Atlantic and through the Strait of Magellan. It does so no longer. The ports of England and continental Europe are on the side street now. Moreover, if we improve our business with the west coast, we shall be better advertised on the east coast; and so the canal will affect, either directly or indirectly, the whole of our South American trade.

The open door, then, means an opportunity. What of the closed door? The annual imports of the ten southern republics are about one billion dollars, and of this total about seventy per cent comes from Europe. For a time Europe will be deprived of at least a great part of seven hundred million dollars' worth of imports. The full significance of these figures, however, lies in the fact that they refer largely to products which we can supply. South Americans import almost everything except what they eat. The clothes on their backs, the furniture in their houses, often the houses themselves, come from abroad. So do the trains in which they travel, the wagons in which they ride, and even some of the paving-stones on which they walk. If they are not to wear old clothes for some time to come, and make old beds and chairs and tables do, they must buy these things of us; and many things besides, to the value of millions of dollars a year. At the very moment that we are suddenly readier for business than ever before, we are just as suddenly offered more than we ever expected. Our opportunity is twofold.

More than that, threefold. There is another favorable factor in the situation, which forms with the other two a coincidence almost as striking. I refer to the sudden disappearance, during last summer, of the old South American antipathy to the United States. Whether or no it would have been advisable, at any time during the last ten or twenty years, to renounce the Monroe Doctrine, it is certain that our not doing so, coupled with intervention in Cuba and more than intervention in Panama, gave rise throughout South America to the suspicion that our watchword was really "All America for the Yankees." But the Latin temperament is prone to sudden changes. From the moment that we accepted the mediation of Argentina, Brazil, and Chile in the Mexican imbroglio, old grudges were forgotten. We are no longer suspected of international double-dealing. It is no longer feared that we are about to "take" Mexico. The Monroe Doctrine has become an academic question. If

our engineers have opened a way to South American markets, our statesmen have opened a way to South American hearts. Our prospective customers not only need to do business with us; they are also ready and willing. The opportunity given us by the war and the canal is rounded out by the mediation.

Even yet, however, I have not mentioned the full importance of our threefold chance. It does not lie in the possibility of a temporary increase of trade, however great. If we use well the years during which Europe, as a result of militaristic policies, is handicapped; if we use well the canal and the mediation, which are the results of our policies; if, in short, we supply South Americans with what they need at present,—the majority of them will not turn again to Europe in the future. There lies before us, indeed, a golden opportunity, forged for us by our engineers, our statesmen, and fate—the opportunity to become providers in chief to South America for good and all.

Not all opportunities that glitter, however, are golden. There are at least three obstacles which stand in the way of our taking advantage, easily or immediately, of the present situation. The most evident is the necessity of installing what might be called the machinery of foreign trade. What England and Germany have done, we have left undone. They have woven a network of steamship lines between the South American countries and themselves. They have established banks in every important city, which means more than it says, for their foreign banks are commercial agencies as well, conversant with the financial situation of the country in which they are placed, and also with the rating of every business man within their reach. Hardly less efficient as sources of credit information are the consuls of Germany and England. And finally, those two governments give their financial and diplomatic support to experienced travelling agents, whose reports cover everything in the field, from railroad corporations to mule-trains. The English or

German manufacturer, then, does not shrink from changing many details of his business to suit South American exigencies, for he knows that the cost, however great, is only a fair charge for the privilege of using the national machinery which will grind out his share of the whole profit. The United States manufacturer, on the contrary, foresees that his venture will be, not only at the beginning, but until the very end, a struggle against handicaps, for he will have to ship his goods in foreign bottoms, he will have to rely on reports from untrained consuls, he will have to conduct every financial operation through London. No wonder, then, that the average business man of our country is skeptical of our so-called South American opportunity.

The second obstacle is the necessity of establishing United States markets for South American products. Reciprocity in markets, of course, is almost a *sine qua non* of international business, inasmuch as shipping companies cannot well afford to send boats abroad, no matter how heavily laden, only to bring them back in ballast. Of much more importance than this, however, is the consideration that the purchasing power of South America has always depended largely on her European markets. Since the war has deprived her of many of these, she is left with a greatly diminished income. Obviously, therefore, our opportunity is robbed of immediate value.

But there is still another difficulty—the most serious of all,—our inability to finance the countries of South America. Europe, which has heretofore supplied them with funds, has suddenly failed them. Their purchasing power, therefore, already greatly impaired by loss of markets, has become almost non-existent. Before we can sell, we must supply the money to buy, in the form of credits, loans, and investments. It would be impossible, however, even under normal conditions, for the average United States exporter suddenly to change from a cash system of selling to a credit system, especially to the long-credit system which

Germans and English, emboldened by their trade machinery, have established abroad. As to loans and investments, they might be advisable if the conditions were normal, but they are perilous at present. Indeed, as long as machinery and markets are lacking, an attempt to create purchasing power for South America by financing her would be very much like trying to generate water-power by building a dam in a pool without inlet or outlet.

The three favorable factors in the present situation are thus offset by three which are unfavorable. If the advantages are so striking that they justify the use of the word opportunity, the disadvantages are so serious that we cannot but wonder whether it is possible to overcome them within the term of that opportunity, that is, before Europe is again a strong competitor; or whether, even if possible, the results would be worth the sacrifices involved. It is easy to understand, now, why some are crying opportunity, while others shrug their shoulders.

Let us assume, for a moment, that we are to seize our opportunity at all costs; in other words, that we are to endeavor to increase our trade before Europe recovers. If this is what we intend to do, it is evident that our prime necessity is for constructive legislation and commercial diplomacy. It cannot be expected that the average United States manufacturer will turn exporter overnight, only to foot the bill the morning after. When the threefold problem of machinery, markets, and money has been solved, then will be the time for our manufacturers to enter, one and all, heart and soul, into the field. Then will be the actual moment for grasping our opportunity. Meanwhile, in the language of the street, "it is up to" our statesmen and financiers.

It is possible to interpret their present activities as a sign that they have accepted this responsibility. They have started to install trade machinery. The amendment to the Panama Canal Act, admitting to registry foreign-built

ships of American ownership, and the ill-fated bill for government-owned boats, constitute an effort to give us a merchant marine of our own. Our new banking law has enabled the National City Bank of New York to establish branches in Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro, which will perform the usual banking functions, and act in many other ways as intermediaries between sellers and buyers. Our leading business men, moreover, are considering the establishment of markets for some southern products, notably for Bolivian tin. And finally, as to financing South America, the recent flotation of two Argentinian loans constitutes a first step which promises well. In any case, if we are to have our own banks in the field, with their facilities for credit information, with their power, given them by the Federal Reserve Act, of accepting and discounting bills of exchange based on the importation and exportation of goods, the solution of the financial problem is for the first time possible.

Our statesmen and financiers, then, have begun. But will they finish in time? Before Europe is again a strong competitor—and we hope, certainly, that this will not be long,—they must give us a merchant marine worthy of the name, they must put banks in every important city instead of in two only, they must establish markets for many products instead of for two or three, they must really solve the financial problem. What has been done is very little as compared with what is still to be done.

There is only one way to reach the end of the road in time. For the accomplishment of such difficult tasks, our statesmen and capitalists must have public opinion back of them. It was back of them in the beginning. The outbreak of war, like a vivid lightning flash, revealed in sharp outlines our unpreparedness for foreign trade; and there was created at once a widespread sentiment in favor of quick action. In the matter of a merchant marine, the sudden cessation of shipping was of greater value than a

half-century of arguments. At the moment of bitter realization of our helplessness, there was no opposition to the immediate passage of the amendment for ship-registry. And our capitalists, with the newspapers crying opportunity from the tops of their columns, felt that the whole country favored their initial efforts to give purchasing power to South America. The public enthusiasm, however, is rapidly decreasing. We are already forgetting what we saw in that flash, and the three obstacles are looming larger every moment. Hence it is necessary to replace that public opinion which made the first steps possible,—but which, born of consternation, was short-lived,—by one which shall endure.

What would be more certain of endurance than a public opinion based upon knowledge of and sympathy with South America? It would be as permanent as the continent itself.

But let us assume, now, that it would be wiser, considering the cost, to renounce our opportunity. This would not mean, of course, the abandonment of our South American trade. If we believe, as most of us do, that our country has reached that stage of its industrial development which calls for export markets, we must not lose heart merely because we cannot succeed immediately. If the present situation is not an opportunity, it is a lesson. It has brought into relief the need of having trade machinery in South America, of preparing to buy her products, of helping to finance her. All this must be done, opportunity or not, before many of our manufacturers become exporters. And, indeed, the present activities of our leaders, which we diagnosed above as symptoms of a feverish effort, are perhaps only the beginnings of a slow but sure progress towards ultimate success.

There is imminent, however, a new difficulty. I have been using the word *opportunity,* but South Americans are using the word *duty.* Doubtless the bankrupts of Buenos Aires, many of them forced to the wall through no fault of their own, consider themselves the Belgians of the financial

world. Even one of our own capitalists has said: "South America needs us—we must not go down in history as a nation of commercial cowards!" It may be wiser, on the ground that business is business, not to stress the humanitarian aspect of our opportunity, but it is evident that failure to grasp it now, whether due to commercial cowardice or commercial common sense, will mean increased difficulty in the future; for South America will not easily forgive. As a result, our leaders will work at a grave disadvantage. They will encounter a hostility more justifiable, at least from the South American viewpoint, than the suspicions of the past, and therefore harder to dispel. It is clear that their efforts must be encouraged and upheld by an enduring public opinion.

On the assumption, then, that we are to renounce our opportunity, as well as on the assumption that we are to take it, we urgently need a public opinion favorable to South America.

It seems a far cry, doubtless, from the consideration of matters of national moment to the discussion of a linguistic problem. In the present instance, however, the two fields lie side by side, and it is easy, as well as logical, to step from one to the other.

The study of foreign languages is only tolerated nowadays. French and German and Spanish, because they are gateways to a broader intellectual and aesthetic life, are branded as cultural studies; and culture, in the good old sense of the word, is countenanced only in old men and young poets. It is true that French and German are cultural first of all. Their defenders had best continue to defend them mainly on that ground, and be as voices crying in a wilderness of machinery and bank-accounts. But not so with Spanish, at least in the United States. To the study of that language, our present relations with South America have given a new and paramount value, which entitles it

to as much respect, even from practical men, as the study of engineering or stocks and bonds.

This does not mean, however, that I am about to set forth, in the traditional manner, the importance of Spanish for commercial travellers in Latin America. There is far more in the matter than that. If there were not, I should be writing for a trade journal. The value to which I refer is not for exporters alone; it is for all of us, for each and every one of us, whether business man or not, whether practical man or not—why not say, in this feministic age, whether man or not.

Although there is not, at present, a public opinion favorable to South America, there is certainly a growing curiosity in regard to her. Our popular magazines would not be printing so many South American articles, or our publishers so many South American books, unless readers wanted them; in our colleges there is an ever-increasing demand for courses on South American subjects. This new interest may be regarded as the beginning of what we need. Public opinion is struggling for existence. But it cannot thrive on a few good books and articles. It is suffering from an insufficient supply of the two necessities of its life—knowledge of and sympathy with South America. And both these would come through the study of Spanish.

The study of a language brings, first, knowledge of the people who speak it. This is not only because of the obvious impossibility of reading a nation's literature without learning a good deal about the nation itself. Even more important is the way languages are taught nowadays. Many of my readers will be surprised to learn that our instruments of pedagogical torture are not as ridiculous as they used to be. We no longer fill grammatical exercises with abstract nouns peculiar to the style of Corneille or Cervantes, or with jackals and pashas merely because they are irregular plurals. The aim of a modern grammar is to supply the student with the vocabulary of the custom-house, the rail-

way-station, and the hotel; with the words and phrases, in short, which he will really need when he goes abroad. A modern composition-book contains all sorts of useful information in regard to the country of its language. The conscientious teacher of to-day, moreover, takes every occasion to amplify and supplement the hints of his text-books. So it is that a two-years' course in Spanish, the language of every country of South America except Brazil, could not fail to teach somewhat of South America's geography and history, and even of her economics and government.

Through the study of a foreign language also comes sympathy with the people who speak it. This is doubtless in large part a result of the greater knowledge of them which comes first. The better you know a man, the more you like him—provided, of course, that he is worth knowing—and the same is true of a nation. We already have sympathy *for* South Americans, thinking that they can neither govern themselves nor doctor themselves. What we need is less sympathy *for,* and more *with* them. When we find out, at last, that our judgment of their doctors is erroneous, that our contempt for their way of governing themselves is due merely to its being different from ours, and that they may be very different from us and yet as good and even as wise as we are, then we shall begin to look upon them as fellow beings. But, aside from working through acquaintance, language works for friendliness *per se,* in a mysterious way which baffles explanation. Its power for sympathy is difficult to analyze, but the power itself is undeniable. The study of South America's language would make of us South American sympathizers.

The ideal way, certainly, of attaining to the end in view, would be through separate courses in South America's geography, history, economics, and government, as well as in her language. Ideally, also, we should study Portuguese, the language of Brazil. It would be unwise, however, to try to introduce into our schools and colleges all these

studies at once, when there is one which contains something of all the others, and which would give us enough knowledge and sympathy to create the public opinion we need. We must for a time concentrate our efforts on Spanish. It is the only practical way.

As far as our students are concerned, they are ready and willing. Some of them feel the new curiosity in regard to South America. Their eagerness for Spanish, whether their own or a reflection of the wishes of their parents, is one form of that undeveloped public opinion which is hungering for nourishment. The rest are moved by a consideration which has nothing to do with South America—they have inherited from former generations of students a traditional distrust of the value of French and a traditional terror of the difficulties of German. A substitute seems a good risk. However unjustifiable the attitude may be, it at least acquits them of blame from our present viewpoint. It is not their fault that Spanish is not generally studied.

It is not studied because it is not taught. In the face of the ever-growing demand, our educators are unmoved. According to information from the Bureau of Education, there are in the whole United States only 765 secondary schools which teach it! And the majority of these are either technical and commercial schools, or schools in border States. In our colleges, the election of Spanish is restricted by arbitrary and artificial rules, such as the requirement of the previous study of French or German, or even of both, which exclude the majority of those who want it. Many of our colleges, moreover, refuse to accept Spanish as a credit for entrance, which renders more difficult still its introduction into secondary schools. Upon our educators, from college presidents to school principals, rests the responsibility of meeting what may be called the national need of Spanish.

Not entirely, however. It will be useless to put Spanish into our courses of study unless our teachers are willing to help. They must teach the Spanish of South America, not, as now, the Spanish of Spain.

The differences between the two, which are very similar to those between our English and that of England, may seem at first sight unimportant; and, to be sure, the most evident, that of pronunciation, is of no importance at all for the question in hand. But there is a vital difference in what the two languages connote, so to speak, of the people who use them. Only South American Spanish can give us what we need.

Imagine the case of a foreigner who should try to become acquainted with us through the study of English under British auspices. In his grammar—written, of course, by an Englishman—there would be a thousand details which would make for local color. The protagonists of the exercises, those ubiquitous Johns and Marys, and their fathers and mothers and cousins of both genders, would be forever buying of coster-boys, or going with their boots to the bootmaker's, or booking their boxes to this or that borough. Worse than that, they would always calculate in pounds, shillings, and pence, not to speak of guineas and crowns. Worst of all, for it would give such opportunities for teaching between the lines, they would visit Westminster Abbey, and cross London Bridge, and talk of Wellington and Nelson and all manner of kings and queens. Out of the grammar, into the reader—the atmosphere would still be British. What would the student learn of Chicago or New York, of Massachusetts or California? Would he ever hear of Jefferson or Lincoln? Or read a line of Longfellow?

And yet this hypothetical student of English would be in no worse plight than our actual students of Spanish, who live in a Castilian, not a Latin-American environment. They can tell you of Madrid and Barcelona, but are unaware that Buenos Aires is the fourth largest city of this hemisphere, or that the United States of Brazil is larger than the United States of America without Alaska. The Puerta del Sol is a byword with them; they have never heard of the Avenida de Mayo or the Alameda. They know the history of Charles

the Fifth or Marshal Prim, not of Bolívar or San Martín. They read Luis de León, not Rubén Darío. And when, their schooling over, they write their first letters in Spanish, they sign them in the good old Castilian way, with magnificent phrases as to kissing of hands or even of feet, much to the disgust of some busy Argentinian or Chilean.

Our teachers of Spanish, then, must make over their grammars and composition-books, giving them the flavor of South America; they must study South American geography, history, and literature; they must not be totally ignorant of South American economics and trade; in a word, they must learn to teach from an entirely new point of view. This is asking a good deal; it is more than asking new tricks of old dogs—it is asking votaries of culture to turn utilitarians. We may excuse some of them for their gray hairs—or lack of any hair at all. We must excuse a few of them, those who are especially gifted for scholarship, to keep burning the sacred flame of the Castilian spirit against the day when we shall once more have time for culture. For the great majority, however, the logical conclusion cannot be avoided—they must teach the Spanish of South America. Their students are asking for bread; they must not be given a stone, even a stone of great price.

There is a familiar rhyme about an old woman whose pig wouldn't jump over the stile until water quenched fire, and fire burned stick, and stick beat dog, and dog bit pig—whereupon all turned out as it should. In like manner we may achieve success in our South American trade through a series of agencies. It will come through machinery, markets, and money, which will come through public opinion, which will come through Spanish, which will come through our educators and our teachers of Spanish. Upon them rests the ultimate responsibility.